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DONIZETTI;

HIS LIFE AND WORKS.

BY M. DE THÉMINES.

Translated for the ART JOURNAL from the French,

BY MARGARET CECILIA CLEVELAND.

III.

From his earliest youth, Donizetti had felt himself drawn by an irresistible force towards the theatre. One would have said that he foresaw that the stage was his destiny; that there he would shine and become famous. One of his most frequent amusements consisted in building a little theatre and playing there with his young friends different pieces, often fragments of the great dramatic works. Mayr, who perceived this passion for dramatic art in young Gaetano, endeavored to use it to the advantage of the young maestro. He composed pieces himself into which he introduced the role of a lyrical composer. This was what he designed for Donizetti. Let us hasten to add that he filled it with a talent and *brio* that no one would have expected from so young a musician.

As Simon Mayr felt that this predilection for the dramatic art might be injurious to the career of his favorite pupil, he decided that

he and Donizetti must separate, that he must leave the institution. Only he endeavored to soften this brusque measure, by adding that he should always remain his professor and friend.

The precautions of Mayr were useless; the result being entirely opposite to what he expected. Donizetti, not knowing how to renounce the theatre, offered himself to sing, in I do not know what opera, the role of a second tenor, in which part he failed completely.

This failure was more powerful than all the counsels and reasonings of his professor. It caused him to renounce the stage forever. "If I cannot appear there as an actor," said he, "I will figure there as an author." But one cannot in a day, realize such a determination.

Mayr, who saw a certain discouragement taking hold of his pupil, cut short all his hesitations, by signifying to him that he must change his residence. "Listen, said he, "I can teach you nothing more, and you have not yet finished your studies. You must go to Bologna, where you will find the Padre Mattei, our master in every thing relating to the science of music. I have often referred to him when speaking to you of fugues. There does not exist another like him in the world for the disposition and development of a fugue. You will let me hear of him. Here is a letter to him, and another which was given me by Giovanni Ricordi, of Milan, the music publisher. Who knows! some day or another he may be your publisher, if you in your turn become a composer. Go, my son, and work steadily."

Mayr did not know he had spoken so prophetically with regard to Ricordi.

It was the year 1815. Donizetti left for Bologna; he saw the Padre Mattei, who, after a short examination, confided the pupil to Giuseppe Pilotti, to have him follow, under his direction, a course of thorough-bass.

One may see, at the present time, in the registers of the *Lycée Philharmonique* of the city of Bologna, that the name of Gaetano Donizetti figured in the list of pupils for the years 1815-16, 1816-17.

Mattei had made some remarkable pupils: he had just launched into his career Marlacchi, and was just finishing Rossini.

But the lessons of Mattei were too short. He confined himself to running rapidly over the pupil's composition, gave his opinion in haste, and that was all. But this would not do for Donizetti. The young man felt that he should be obliged to resort to stratagem, and procure more regular and profitable lessons by acts of devotion.

Thus he attached himself to Mattei like his shadow, and adapted himself to all his habits. He awaited him at the door every day after dinner and accompanied him to the church, where the reverend father said his prayers. From thence he followed him to the cathedral, then home, where he remained entire hours at the card table to play at *piquet* with his master's old mother. At length, when the good woman had retired, and Mattei had taken his supper, he obtained a half-hour's lesson, which he paid for by six or seven hours of ennui and devotion. It is unnecessary to add, that, on his part, the Padre Mattei would not have consented to being followed thus a good part of the day and all the evening, if he had not loved young Donizetti, and discerned in him something of his future.

There are, in the Lycée of Bologna, compositions of Donizetti's dated during the two years that he passed in that institution. We will mention:

1. Symphony-concerto in D. Major, a *grand orchestre*; composed in 1816, and executed the 19th of June, 1819, at the Lycée of Bologna for the annual exercises.

2. Scene and aria for soprano, orchestrated.

3. Symphony à *grand orchestre* in C Major, written in June, 1816.

4. *Tantum ergo*, for three voices, two tenors and bass; orchestrated. November, 1816.

5. *Concerto de cor* with orchestral accompaniment; composed in 1816, and executed at the annual exercises of the Lycée, 1817.

6. *Kyrie* in D Minor, for four voices, with orchestral accompaniment, written the 7th of August, 1817, and performed at the fête of St. Cecilia, the 22d November, of the same year.

7. *Il ritorno di primavera*, cantata for three voices, with chorus and orchestra, words by Morando; composed in the month of April, 1815.

8. *Cedé la mia costanza*, *morceau fux gué*, in A Minor, for four voices, without accompaniment, 1820.

These last two pieces, although they were preserved in the municipal archives of the Lycée of Bologna, were not composed at the time Donizetti was at the college, for the registers of the lists of pupils state that he left there early in the year 1818.

And if he left the Lycée at this epoch, it was by the advice of his professor, for, even as he could no longer learn from Simon Mayr when he left Bologna, so, "for elegant style, free and dramatic, there remained nothing to learn at the school of Padre Mattei."

These words are taken from a letter that M. G. Gasperi, librarian of the Lycée Philharmonique of Bologna, wrote to the lawyer Cicconetti, informing him of the compositions of Donizetti that were preserved in the archives of that Institution.

So the young musician left Bologna and returned to Bergamo. Here a circumstance, little known, took place, which illustrates his great facility for memorizing music.

Simon Mayr's opera, *La Rose Blanche et la Rose Rouge*, had been represented at the theatre. The impresario, having fallen out with the composer, would not consent to give him back the original manuscript of the score. Mayr possessed no copy. He was incensed to the highest degree, but the impresario had the right, and exercised it in a manner by far too absolute. He might have retained the original, but at the same time permitted the author to make a copy at his expense. Donizetti was even more furious than his master. In vain he attempted to soften the brusque contractor. A few days after, he went to see Mayr, and holding out a large roll of music, said:—Master, I was so grieved to see that you could not obtain a copy of your opera, that I have endeavored to transcribe it from memory. Here it is.

Simon Mayr was stupefied. He ran over the manuscript; there was not a note to change.

In a transport of joy easily understood, he drew from his pocket his watch, and sliding it into Donizetti's hand:

—There, said he, keep it; I have worn it for ten years; we shall thus have a souvenir of one another.

Is not this a fine companion to the famous *Miserere* of the Sixtine Chapel, which Mozart recalled entire after a single hearing? Much has been said of that *tour de force*, of that miracle of the memory. It was a miracle, truly. But an opera is well worth a *Miserere*!

It is not asserted that artistic music is incompatible with a worshipful spirit; but that in itself, it has not the essence of religion. When high musical culture is joined with a truly devout and consecrated spirit, then, indeed, the result is glorious. Most fortunate is the church which enjoys such a combination in its religious services. But the idea that the finest music without the spirit of worship is either acceptable to God or beneficial to the congregation is a delusion and a snare.

WEIMER.—A new Opera, *Gustavus Vasa, der Held des Nordens*, by Herr Carl Götze, is to be produced here next season.

[From the Sunday Times.]

JOHN HOWARD PAYNE.

SECOND ARTICLE.

When we remember that a number of the effects experienced by the mind, through the medium of music, are attributable to the constitution of the mind itself, rather than to any appreciable peculiarities of the tones presented to our perceptive faculties, and that some of the phenomena affect the mind to a remarkable extent during the performance of the majority of ballads and other fugitive pieces, it is evident that we often experience an insuperable difficulty in analysing the strains most pleasing to our ear. The melody, however, of "Home, Sweet Home," is certainly one of the finest among the musical productions which do so much honor to our race and language. Without possessing a quaintness of utterance, such as is a peculiarity of the old British airs, it contains all the freshness characteristic of the most meritorious of those ancient compositions. With regard to modern compositions, "Home, Sweet Home" has shared the honors which have been showered upon them—a merit, indeed, which must be extreme to vie with such effusions as "The Last Rose of Summer," "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms," "Annie Laurie," "Kinlock of Kinlock," and "Ye Banks and Braes." Who has heard the silvery tones of these gems without losing himself amidst dreams of gentleness or grief? And if the song we are more particularly considering possesses a troop of such ravishing idealities, how can we analyse its phrases with a better hope of success than would attend a similar examination of the songs we have mentioned? Were we asked to what is to be attributed the universal favor, and even love, with which the composition is received wherever our language is spoken, we could offer but one *apparent* reason—its delightful simplicity. It is to this very simplicity, however, that the difficulty of expressing the author's conception is to be attributed.

All who have heard "Ye Banks and Braes" must be aware of the fact that a tolerable voice is capable of rendering this song with a considerable amount of the sentiment which the author designed to express, and a similar construction in the succession of tones renders it possible to place many other airs in the same category as regards facility of expression; but when a difficulty of expressing ideas is experienced, (and in "Home, Sweet Home" the difficulty is pre-eminent) it seems to be due partly to the few notes employed to express the ideas, and partly to the simplicity of their order in succession. Here expression is not the utterance of the relation merely of one phrase with another, but of the pathos with which one links note to note.

All the parties who had any connection with the song—singers, managers, publishers—were benefited; everybody but the poor author, who seems never to have received a dollar, nor even a copy of the song. It was estimated, in 1832, that upwards of one hundred thousand copies had been sold by the original publishers, and that their profits within two years after the song was published amounted to two thousand guineas.

Payne, however, is not the only song-writer who saw another reap the reward to which he was entitled. His friend, George P. Morris, received twenty-five dollars for his song,

"Origin of Yankee Doodle." When the author afterwards wished to incorporate it in the collected editions of his poems, and applied to the publisher for permission, he refused it for any sum less than one thousand five hundred dollars. The beautiful song "Ever of Thee" was sold to a London publisher for one hundred dollars. Its author, urged by wants which song-writing could not supply, committed a crime, was sent to prison, and died of remorse before the trial. Braham, "the sweet singer of Israel," experienced a happier fate. He is supposed to have received a fortune for his copyright of the once popular song "Said a Smile to a Tear," in which he accompanied himself on the piano-forte in the opera called "False Alarms." He was paid one thousand guineas for the music in Dibdin's opera "The English Fleet."

Payne's musical taste was not so much an original endowment as the result of that attention which enables a person of quick sensibility to distinguish melodies, and even to be powerfully affected by them. In this he resembled some of his contemporaries, whose eminence in literature has rendered everything relating to them a matter of interest to the reader. Sir Walter Scott's father cultivated music, and performed on the violin-cello. He gave his son the opportunity of attending the instructions of an enthusiast in Scottish music, who does not seem to have been able to inspire his pupil with the same enthusiasm, if we may judge from an incident related by Lockhart. On one occasion, one of the neighbors, Lady Cumming, "sent to beg that the boys might not all be flogged precisely at the same hour, as, though she had no doubt the punishment was deserved, the noise of the concord was really dreadful." Unpromising a pupil, however, as Scott was, and never able to enjoy complicated music, yet he says himself, in his journal, that "simple melodies, especially if connected with words and ideas, had as much effect upon him as upon most people."

Managers and publishers are very often unthinkingly censured for what is called their niggard treatment of the productions of men of genius. Payne frequently indulged in these complaints, declaring, as Douglas Jerrold did at a later period, that managers and publishers got the loaf and the poor author the crust. Scott, whose judgment was equal to his genius, was of a different opinion; and in one of his letters, in which he refers to these complaints, he says, that upon the whole, the accounts between the parties are pretty equally balanced—what these gentlemen gain at the expense of one class of writers is lost in many cases in bringing forward works of little value. "I do not know," he adds, "but this, on the whole, is favorable to the cause of literature. A bookseller publishes twenty books in hope of making one good speculation, as a person buys a parcel of shares in a lottery in hope of gaining a prize." And a lottery the whole business would seem to be, when we call to mind the caprice of the public and the mistakes of managers and publishers. Both the plays of Goldsmith—"She Stoops to Conquer" and "The Good Natured Man"—were rejected by the managers—the former by Garrick and the latter by Colman. Garrick declined the tragedy of "Douglass," and, at the same time pronounced it "unfit for the stage." Sheridan took a dislike to the neatly-written manuscript of "The Honey Moon," saying "genius is never neat." The play